

Ancient Trees - Some Definitions

Ancient Tree – A tree that is at least 150 years old (*Great Bowden – photo Paul Sutton*)



Veteran Tree – An Ancient Tree that has a girth of at least 3.7 metres (*Bedford Curlieu – photo Derek Lott*)



How to Measure a Tree

1. Measure up 1.3 metres from base of tree (usually chest height on an adult)
2. If there are 'Lumps & Bumps' at this height, adjust to just above or below, whichever is narrowest or easiest to do, but you must go no lower than 0.5 metres above the base
3. If tree is covered in Ivy, try to assess how thick the ivy is and subtract this from the measurement
4. Measure girth (circumference) in metres, to the nearest 10cm. This means the measurement will be to 1 decimal place – ie: 3.1 metres

How to age a Tree

1. Convert girth measurement to centimetres (multiply by 100)
2. Divide this value by 1.25 if tree in woodland or by 2.5 if standing on its own

Exceptions:

1. Yew – 3m = 242 yrs, 4m = 292 yrs, 5m = 720 yrs, 6m = 820yrs, 7m = 1000 yrs
2. Poplars & American giant conifers 2 to 3 times faster than 2.5 cm/year
3. Horse Chestnuts & smaller species grow more slowly
4. Pine trees – count no. of spaces between rings of branches – they grow a new ring (or 'wheel') each year

Other features that can help age trees:

- Written records
- Old maps
- Archaeological remains or ancient burial grounds nearby

Ancient Trees

Why do we feel an affinity with trees?

We have used wood for almost all of our history and pre-history

It is still used today:

Building

Status symbols – i.e. car trims

Furniture

Why are ancient trees important?

Ancient trees have historic value and are indicative of ancient landscapes as well as being of great value to wildlife. For example, Bradgate Park Old Oaks. Woodland is of most use when it comes in a range of shapes, sizes and ages. As trees become older and become hollow, particular habitats for wildlife are provided such as decaying wood, hollows, loose bark, sap runs and rot holes. Tree wounds provide sap runs and fluxes for invertebrates while hollows provide roosting and nesting sites for the barn owl and species of bats such as daubenton's and whiskered.

Further information

For more information on ancient trees go to www.woodland-trust/org.uk/

For a more in depth read try Oliver Rackham's 'The Complete History of Britain's Trees, Woods & Hedgerows' published by Phoenix books.

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